

<b>Institution:</b> University of Oxford
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 34 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory
<b>Title of case study:</b> The Legacy Fellowship: contributing to the lasting impact of London 2012
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>John Gerrard's cinema scale simulation <i>Exercise (Djibouti) 2012</i> emerged from research he carried out as the Legacy Fellow at the Ruskin School of Drawing &amp; Fine Art. The output of the research has created impact by engaging new audiences with contemporary art and increasing its appreciation and understanding among the general public. Further, the project has stimulated debate about the relationships between politics, competitive sport and military warfare and helped to change existing perceptions of the role and function of contemporary art in society and culture. <i>Exercise (Djibouti) 2012</i> has inspired a creative legacy for future generations, contributing to the success of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and the London 2012 Festival, and it has delivered creative synergies and developed new working practices through innovative collaborative partnerships with non-academic organisations.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The Legacy Fellowship was devised and hosted by the Ruskin School of Drawing &amp; Fine Art as a means of celebrating the award to London of the Games of the XXX Olympiad, and comprised the first research fellowship in higher education to fuse art and sport in a meaningful fashion. It was implemented in collaboration with Oxford University Sport and delivered in partnership with Modern Art Oxford.</p> <p>The Legacy Fellowship was awarded to Dublin-born, Vienna-based artist John Gerrard in July 2011. The call for proposals encouraged applicants to express a clear sense of how their research would address the aims, values and themes of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad, and Gerrard was selected on the basis of his submission, which explored various definitions and readings of the term 'exercise'. The Legacy Fellowship celebrated the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games by taking art and sport as the starting points for a new artist's commission and resulted in Gerrard's simulation <i>Exercise (Djibouti) 2012</i>.</p> <p>Gerrard held the Legacy Fellowship through July 2012. During this period he collaborated with elite athletes who were all in training for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. He formulated and refined his ideas following a series of in-depth conversations with the staff at Oxford University Sport, an official pre-Games training camp, and parallel discussions with and observations of elite student and non-student athletes.</p> <p>Shadowing elite athletes permitted Gerrard to focus on the content of high-performance training and how the training regime produced what he described as a 'psychosis of competition': 'The athletes have to bring themselves to this exceptionally painful place and stay there in order to improve on their previous performances, and I didn't want this component of the training process to disappear from the research equation. So I developed the idea that the athletes would be documented through sequences to the point at which they could no longer perform and then they would drop out to recover. I locked onto this idea of an endless training loop [as the basis for a new piece of work].'</p> <p>The artist used his interactions with and observations of elite athletes in the development of an ambitious cinema-scale simulation called <i>Exercise (Djibouti) 2012</i>. Originating in found documentary images of US military exercises in Djibouti, the work reflects on the relationship between competitive sport, military training, theatrical performance and dance. The simulation was created at Audiomotion Studios using sophisticated motion capture technology and features an actual site of military exercise on a vast natural mud flat. Here, two teams of athletes wearing red and blue - the traditional colours of war gaming - meet daily to perform a series of precise, repetitive routines to the point of exhaustion. The scene is a painstaking and extraordinarily detailed reproduction of the site, constructed by hand using photographic and satellite data guides from the real landscape. Neither completely synthetic nor strictly real, the action takes place in real Djibouti time over a yearly cycle and incorporates the movements of the sun, moon and stars.</p>
<p><b>3. References to the research</b></p> <p>John Gerrard, <i>Exercise (Djibouti) 2012</i>, simulation, dimensions variable, Edition 1/4 + 2 A/P, 2012 [<a href="http://www.johngerrard.net/Exercise-Djibouti.html">http://www.johngerrard.net/Exercise-Djibouti.html</a>]</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

Grant support: National Lottery through Arts Council England £65,500; Culture Ireland £16,000; Turning Point South East £13,500; Creative Junction £10,000; John Fell OUP Research Fund £7,500; Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation £3,500; South London Gallery £3,000; Audiomotion Studios £160,000 (support in-kind); and ArtAV £5,000 (support-in-kind).

- > 'The research that underpinned *Exercise (Djibouti) 2012* was of the highest quality.' (Verity Slater, Director of Strategy and Development, Modern Art Oxford)
- > 'The extensive and meticulous research behind its production to enable the digital representation of an entire year is nothing short of exceptional.' (Margot Heller, Director, South London Gallery)
- > 'We started by giving world-class artists the same chance as the athletes: to create once-in-a-lifetime special events - the best from around the world working with the best of British. We asked arts centres and creative leaders for their top ideas. Then we chose the most exciting to be in this showcase of [brilliance].' (Ruth Mackenzie, Director, London 2012 Festival)

#### 4. Details of the impact

*Exercise (Djibouti) 2012* premiered in a solo installation hosted by Modern Art Oxford at the Old Power Station in Oxford (6-29 July 2012)<sup>[i]</sup> as part of the London 2012 Festival and Turning Point South East's RELAY programme<sup>[ii][1]</sup>. The London 2012 Festival was the climax of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and the biggest festival the UK has ever seen. The work was also selected for inclusion in South London Gallery's group exhibition *Pursuit of Perfection: The Politics of Sport* (26 July-14 September 2012)<sup>[iii]</sup>. This presentation of *Exercise (Djibouti) 2012* formed part of SLG Local, a new long-term initiative supported by Southwark Council, Bloomberg and the Big Lottery Fund that brings newly commissioned and existing works to a broad range of social settings in the vicinity of South London Gallery. Both showings of *Exercise (Djibouti) 2012* were timed to coincide with the presence of the Olympic torch locally, and the various opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

##### Engaging new audiences with contemporary art

The London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival placed great emphasis on engaging new audiences<sup>[iv]</sup>. The Gerrard exhibitions and related community education and outreach programmes in Oxford and London contributed audiences of 30,000 people across a diverse range of communities<sup>[v]</sup>. Reviews in the broadcast, print and online media, such as BBC World Service's *The Strand* (15 July 2012), engaged thousands of additional listeners and readers.

The national evaluation of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival<sup>[iv]</sup> found that free tickets enabled new audiences to attend events, especially young people, and that audiences were more generous with their time and more willing to experiment with unfamiliar art if they were not paying for attendance. Taking creative and cultural events out of traditional venues also improved access for non-traditional audiences. In Oxford, the inclusion of *Exercise (Djibouti) 2012* in the London 2012 Festival programme, free entrance and the use of a disused industrial building as a venue attracted audiences who may not normally visit an art gallery or take part in cultural activities. Most visitors to the Oxford installation were local to the Oxford area or came from London and on average they spent over 30 minutes in the installation. Visitors commented 'This is, by far, the coolest thing I've seen in Oxford.' and 'John Gerrard installation in a disused power station? Yes please.' The Project Manager for Learning and Partnerships at Modern Art Oxford<sup>[2]</sup> said 'Perhaps the most important legacy of the Legacy Fellowship [...] is the numerous relationships developed with individuals from Oxford's communities... [It] has broken down some of the perceived barriers to accessing culture and sport and will encourage a wider audience to attend Modern Art Oxford's programme of exhibitions and events.'

The inclusion of Gerrard's work in South London Gallery's satellite venue of Southwark Old Town Hall attracted significant new audiences to the work in another region and social setting<sup>[3]</sup>. One visitor commented 'Some great work at South London Gallery's new show at Southwark Old Town Hall. John Gerrard and Lucy Gunning particularly excellent.'

##### Increasing appreciation and understanding of contemporary art

By fully embracing the ethos of the London 2012 Games, the Legacy Fellowship's contribution to the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and the London 2012 Festival helped the organisers to meet their legacy objectives<sup>[iv][4][5]</sup>. A poll showed that nine out of every ten people who attended the

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London 2012 Festival said it was 'a positive addition' to the London 2012 Games. Audiences and participants said their involvement helped to create a sense of 'once-in-a-lifetime' excitement, which tuned in with the Games themselves. A third of the people surveyed said they would take part in future arts, culture and entertainment events as a result.

Modern Art Oxford surveyed visitors to the installation in Oxford<sup>[1]</sup>. Of the 120 visitors who were surveyed, 94% rated the experience as excellent or good. Comments included 'Amazing work. Impressive that it's running live' and 'Wish I had longer to spend more time! Definitely coming back! Thank you!'. The positive comments on the presentation in Oxford were reinforced by the online reviews, such as 'As one wanders through, up and around the imposing Old Power Station, a building that sits still, yet wound like a coil, poised ready for the action that unfolds in the enormous void of an exhibition space within it, you are dwarfed by the most enormous, jaw-dropping screen that dominates its stage. This is mind blowing, on every level.' (Oxford Mail<sup>[vi]</sup>). The Southwark exhibition was also positively received in the media and audience members had a 'mesmerising' (@whattheysaw) and 'hypnotic' (@shonagham) experience watching the film<sup>[3]</sup>. It was given 4/5 stars in the Independent (19 August 2012)<sup>[vii]</sup> and the Evening Standard (27 July 2012), was Exhibition of the Week in Time Out (14 August 2012) and was in the Guardian's top 5 London art exhibitions that summer (27 July 2012).

### Stimulating debate and changing perceptions

A number of talks and discussions allowed audiences to meet the artist and gain further insights into his work. This was instrumental in encouraging audiences to delve deeper into the issues and changing perceptions of contemporary art through interpretation methods that made it accessible to a non-specialist audience. One participant said 'Thrilled to meet John Gerrard today and see his new installation. A fascinating and phenomenal feat on every level! Go see it!' (@SarahFMayhew)

Gerrard's work encouraged debate amongst audience members, drawing parallels between politics, competitive sport and military warfare. This brought some uncomfortable truths back into audience minds at a time of national euphoria about the London 2012 Games: '*Exercise (Djibouti) 2012* may just be the only part of the London 2012 Festival with an element of critique for a sporting festival which is beginning to suffer with a reputation for corporatism. Thanks to this brave piece in Oxford, parallels can be drawn between the spectacle of war and the spectacle of the Games' Culture24 (12 July 2012)<sup>[viii]</sup>; 'Sitting in [Southwark Old Town Hall], you sense a series of uneasy connections: between politics and distance, power and death, *Match of the Day* and *The World at War*' Independent on Sunday (19 August 2012)<sup>[viii]</sup>; '[This] spectacle fusing military and sporting prowess is as troubling as it is breathtaking' Guardian (7 July 2012); 'It poses a very fresh, new perspective on the London 2012 Olympic Games, and caused me to consider the political element of Olympic level power struggles, and engage in what the Olympics actually mean...' (Oxford Mail<sup>[vi]</sup>).

### Inspiring creativity and creating legacy for future generations

*Exercise (Djibouti) 2012* created opportunities for young people and community members of all ages to become active participants in creative programmes, learning and sharing new creative skills<sup>[2]</sup>. This was another key contribution to the aims of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival<sup>[4]</sup>. Artists Search Party and Tamarin Norwood led a series of workshop sessions in primary schools, involving over 100 8-9 year olds in a range of activities drawing on the notion of a team in sport. The children took part in story-telling, drama-based exercises and craft-based making, and their perspectives on Oxford served to inform *Search Party versus Oxford*, a participatory table tennis performance marathon in Oxford city centre, which attracted almost 1,500 people. Tamarin Norwood's residency at Modern Art Oxford, which responded to *Exercise (Djibouti) 2012*, included an exhibition, performance, open studio and public talk, attracting more than 4,000 people. Evil Twin Artworks introduced a group of young people at risk of social exclusion to games design via a dedicated short course. The programme culminated in a four-day games camp for more than 50 participants called the *Oxford Digital Olympiad*<sup>[ix]</sup>.

'The students from Northfield Residential School had never visited a contemporary art gallery before and did not know that Modern Art Oxford was situated in their home town. They now feel confident in visiting the gallery on their own, as demonstrated through one student taking their friends there at the weekend. The students meeting with the artist John Gerrard and having a private talk made them feel special and enabled them to fully understand the complexities of the

artwork.' (Support worker from school involved in the *Oxford Digital Olympiad*.)

### **Building mutually beneficial and synergistic relationships with non-academic partners**

A number of unique collaborations and new working practices supported by the Legacy Fellowship have had a lasting impact on the creative organisations involved and the way they work. The presentation of *Exercise (Djibouti) 2012* in the Old Power Station in Oxford was devised in discussion with the curatorial team at Modern Art Oxford, one of Britain's leading venues for the presentation of modern and contemporary art, and it remains one of the most ambitious off-site projects in the organisation's history. 'For Modern Art Oxford the key benefits included the testing of new ways of (i) working collaboratively with partners in the higher education sector (ii) delivering a major research-driven artistic commission beyond the walls of the gallery and (iii) attracting and informing audiences via a bespoke community education and outreach programme, which involved other practitioners and further strengthened links between Modern Art Oxford, public and professional audiences.'<sup>11</sup>

The relationship with Audiomotion Studios was also important. Audiomotion Studios is Europe's leading performance capture service provider, specialising in the provision of motion capture services to the game development, film and television industries. Not only were Audiomotion Studios involved in the production of *Exercise (Djibouti) 2012*, they also provided financial support for the presentations in Oxford and London<sup>11</sup>. For them, working on a piece of contemporary art allowed the company to experiment away from their core business area. The mutually beneficial partnership between the University of Oxford, Modern Art Oxford and Audiomotion Studios was a major factor in bringing Gerrard's research to a wide audience and on a grand scale.

## **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

### Testimonial evidence

- [1] Email statement from Director of Strategy And Development, Modern Art Oxford
- [2] Email statement from Project Manager for Learning and Partnerships, Modern Art Oxford
- [3] Email statement from Director, South London Gallery
- [4] Online statement from Director, London 2012 Festival
- [5] Email statement from Creative Programmer for London 2012, South East

### Other sources of corroboration

- [i] *Exercise (Djibouti) 2012*, Modern Art Oxford Offsite at the Old Power Station, Oxford, 06/07/2012-29/07/2012 <http://www.modernartoxford.org.uk/whats-on/exercise-djibouti-2012/about/>
- [ii] Cultural Olympiad in the South-East September 2010-September 2012 (Record of achievements and part of the overall evaluation of Cultural Olympiad) [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/se\\_website\\_images/SouthEastCulturalOlympiadVolumeTwo.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/se_website_images/SouthEastCulturalOlympiadVolumeTwo.pdf)
- [iii] Group show - *Pursuit of Perfection: The Politics of Sport* including *Exercise (Djibouti) 2012*, 27/07/2012-14/09/2012, South London Gallery and Southwark Old Town Hall. <http://www.southlondongallery.org/page/pursuitofperfection>
- [iv] Reflections on the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival (Summary of the final evaluation) <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/news/arts-council-news/London-2012-Cultural-Olympiad-evaluation/>
- [v] Paul Bonaventura, *The Legacy Fellowship Evaluation Report* submitted to Arts Council England
- [vi] Sarah Mayhew, Powerful images capture Olympic spirit in art exhibition at Oxford's Old Power Station, Oxford Mail, newspaper article (19 July 2012) <http://tinyurl.com/c2hxwf3>
- [vii] Charles Darwent, Pursuit of Perfection: The Politics of Sport, Independent on Sunday, newspaper article (19 August 2012) <http://tinyurl.com/o2o6l3k>
- [viii] Mark Sheerin, John Gerrard brings Exercise (Djibouti) 2012 to the Old Power Station, Oxford, Culture24, online article (12 July 2012) <http://www.culture24.org.uk/art/new-media/art392263>
- [ix] Oxford Digital Olympiad <http://www.creativejunction.org.uk/what-we-do/london-2012/oxford-digital-olympiad-london-2012-inspired-cultural-olympiad>